The Cleveland Museum of Art

Press Release

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ART MUSEUM ACQUIRES TWO EXCEPTIONAL WORKS

Two important works of art--the most ancient and the newest in the permanent collections--were approved by the Board of Trustees at its annual meeting on December 13, 1993.

Stargazer is the name given to a series of sculptured figures made about 5000 years ago in West Asia, probably in regions now part of Turkey. These "stargazers" are among the earliest attempts to render the human figure in stone, and they are, according to curator of ancient art Arielle P. Kozloff, "arguably the most beautiful." The marble figure just acquired is the finest of its kind and in the best condition of the dozen that are known. Approximately 6-1/2 inches tall, the small female figure is brilliantly proportioned and balanced. Her ancient sculptor knew his stone intimately, deftly organizing the sculpture within the block of white marble so that a fine vein of charcoal grey fell across the figure's forehead and draped the shoulder in the back. Eyes, ears, and nose are rendered as tiny accents visible only at close examination. The abstract female body lifts its head, shaped like a full moon atop an elegantly tapered neck, toward the heavens. Once in the collection of Nelson Rockefeller, Cleveland's *Stargazer* becomes the most ancient human figural sculpture in the Museum and a cornerstone for all of the Museum's collections of Western sculpture.

The sculpture will go on exhibition in the galleries of Egyptian art during the second week of January, 1994.

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Oblation is a complex and ambitious painting of 1990 by Francesco Clemente, who is at age 41 is one of the most important artists of his generation. The composition depicts the hands, legs, and feet of a stylized male figure in a strange Yogic position. He occupies the top center, and below him are silhouettes of a variety of animals, painted primarily in dry white pigment (oil and tempera on linen). A bold red background unites the composition, severely reducing space by eliminating perspective, as the artist has eliminated modeling from the animals.

Clemente's title refers to the offering of bread and wine to God at Communion--or, more broadly stated, to any religious offering. For many years, Clemente has relied on non-Western, especially Indian, influences, successfully incorporating imagery and iconography associated with Eastern religion, philosophy, and art to explore universal ideas of creation, life, and death. In *Oblation*, he has particularly relied on animals for their rich association with Indian culture. The

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Yogic position of the central male figure may, curator of contemporary art Tom Hinson observes, suggests the peace found in Yoga, when mind and body are in union, comparable to the sacred harmony achieved when man places himself in a reverential position toward animals.

This is the first painting by Clemente, or by any contemporary Italian artist, to enter the Museum collection. It adds an impressive work by a prolific and inventive artist as well as a contemporary rendering of traditional imagery and iconography represented in the Museum's renowned collection of Indian art.

The painting is now on exhibition in Gallery 240, in the contemporary collection.

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Stargazer is acquired with funds from the Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. and John L. Severance Funds. *Oblation* is purchased with income from the Dorothea Wright Hamilton Fund, dedicated monies to acquire art created during the past twenty years.

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For additional information, photographs, slides, please contact Adele Z. Silver, Public Information, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland OH 44106-1797; 216/421-7340.